



KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

## KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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# Researchers call for wildlife-friendly roads

**KOTA KINABALU:** A statewide study on rampant animal roadkill suggests that more wildlife-friendly roads need to be built in Sabah.

University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF), which carried out the study, said the growing scientific opinion was that the wildlife population in Sabah might decline if more roads were built across key habitat areas.

It said 21 mammal, 10 bird and five reptile species had been identified as victims or potential victims of roadkill.

The animals were killed due to roads constructed near forests, drivers not being able to see nocturnal mammals crossing at night and wildlife being attracted to food waste discarded on roads.

The study also found that endangered species, such as elephants, pangolins, clouded leopards, proboscis monkeys, slow loris and banteng, were sighted along sample road transects, with the highest number of roadkill incidents recorded in the Kinabatangan area.

"UCSF sees the need to contribute its expertise to the road-planning process.

"If more roads are constructed in or around forested areas without careful consideration for wildlife ecology, the problem could be exacerbated."

Since September last year, the study looked into five major traffic corridors to understand the interactions between wildlife and roads.

The traffic corridors were Sindumin-Papar-Tuaran, Kota Belud-Kota Marudu-Kudat, Tamparuli-Telupid-Sandakan, Kinabatangan-Lahad Datu-Tawau and Tawau-Kalabakan-Keningau-Kimanis.

Sabah relies heavily on its biodiversity to support its RM8.5 billion tourism industry, which is the third highest contributor to the state's economy after agriculture and manufacturing.

The Heart of Borneo initiative and commitment to preserve 30 per cent of the state are some of the measures to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

However, to advance socio-economic development, the state would need more roads for connectivity and the Pan-Borneo Highway is often touted as the long-awaited answer.